

The Ramparts We Watch: film documentary discourse in the field of Public Relations

The Ramparts We Watch: el discurso del cine documental en el campo de las Relaciones Públicas

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze Louis de Rochemont's *The Ramparts We Watch* as a public relations war effort from the past century. Arising from the informative and propagandistic strategy of late 1930s newsreels, the aforementioned documentary was made using very appropriate narrative techniques to award it the dimension of objectivity and truthfulness characteristic of public relations messages, without losing sight of its educational and persuasive function. From this standpoint, *The Ramparts We Watch* founded a genre and constituted one of the clearest precedents of public relations war films in America.

Keywords: Propaganda, screen magazine, documentary films, Public Relations, war films, Louis de Rochemont

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar el film de Louis de Rochemont, *The Ramparts We Watch*, en tanto que un esfuerzo de relaciones públicas en tiempos de guerra. Surgido de la estrategia informativa y propagandística de los noticiarios de la segunda mitad de los años 30, este documental se realizó mediante el uso de técnicas narrativas muy adecuadas para conseguir la dimensión de objetividad y veracidad que debe caracterizar los mensajes de relaciones públicas, sin perder de vista su función educativa y persuasiva. Desde ese punto de vista, *The Ramparts We Watch* adquirió un carácter fundacional y constituyó uno de los

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más claros precedentes de los filmes de relaciones públicas realizados en Estados Unidos, en el contexto de la guerra.

Palabras clave: Propaganda, noticiarios cinematográficos, films documentales, películas de guerra de relaciones públicas, Louis de Rochemont

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1.INTRODUCTION

The documentary had traditionally only been considered of secondary importance in the commercial strategy employed by large Hollywood producers, a fact that can be confirmed by looking at the billboards of the 1930s and 40s. At that time, the presence of documentary images in US cinemas was restricted to the weekly screening of news bulletins before fiction movies. An *ad hoc* cinema bill of the age would include these newsreels, a short cartoon, commercials and charity appeals, the full length A movie and the complementary B movie. However, screening times were advertised on the basis of the start of the A movie and not the newsreel beginning the session (Doherty, 1997).

All of the large film production companies of the age ended up allocating a –small– part of their budget to producing news bulletins and created units that had the basic function of gathering news items which were then produced for screening in cinemas. Among these documentary units were *Paramount News*, *20th Century Fox's Movietone News*, *RKO-Pathé News*, *MGM's News of the Day*, and *Universal Newsreel*. The two basic formats under which documentary images were distributed were *newsreel* and *screen magazine*.

The newsreel tended to be shown in cinemas twice a week and lasted from eight to ten minutes. It offered a panoramic view of current events in a compact format: home and foreign news, parades and foreign shows, images of celebrities, pin-ups, children and animals in unusual situations, sports, etc.; in short: a potpourri of images and news which by no means offered a critical view of reality.

As Doherty pointed out: "The newsreels were required to abide by the Production [Hays] Code, whose regulations on permissible images, proper language, and correct opinions mandated discretion in the exposure of blunt reality" (Doherty, 1997: 401). This preventive option also obeyed a less *moral* motive: there was no need to indispose the audience, who had left their home to spend a nice evening watching a movie, with unpleasant news and images. Most newsreel producers believed their products had to be closer to entertainment than journalism (Fielding, 1972).

During the thirties, however, and with the gathering pace of world events, newsreels covered happenings like the bombing of Shanghai during the Sino-Japanese war, the bombing of the American ship Panay during the same war, and the assassination of the king of Yugoslavia. At the beginning of the forties, with the world at war and issues related to external affairs and defense of the nation taking priority in Franklin Delano Roosevelt's policies, newsreels allocated more minutes to these issues accordingly. In 1939, foreign news and images of the war in Europe occupied almost 30% of their content. Although by 1940–41 the projection of images related to the world war had been reduced, news related to national defence policies had increased considerably (Steele, 1985; Fielding, 1972). According to Schatz (1997), over 20 newsreels covered the war from September 1939 to December 1941, informing Americans of the events taking place in Europe and the Far East.

As Steele (1985) points out, newsreels tended to align themselves, via images, with the interventionist and pro-Allied theories of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration. However, a reluctance to show overly explicit images and the superficiality with which the news was treated –mostly due its inherent brevity– were principal characteristics of the format (Girona, 2009).

Screen magazines, on the other hand, were considered to take a more in-depth approach to issues. If newsreels basically functioned as a headline service, screen magazines could be compared to an in-depth article in a weekly magazine. Although initially including three news items in their monthly screenings, from 1938 onwards they were dedicated to one single issue and ran for fifteen or twenty minutes.

There were two screen magazines of note at the time: *The March of Time* (1935–1951) and *This is America* (1942–1951).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Recent research has shown that during World War II the American film industry established the foundations for disseminating and informing American soldiers and public opinion on the aggressive expansionist policy of the countries comprising the Axis (Girona and Xifra, 2009, 2010). These foundations had their seed in Archibald McLeish's *strategy of truth*. As Girona and Xifra (2009) have argued, the strategy of truth and other subsequent efforts, such as the *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (1942), the efforts of General George C. Marshall and the production of the documentary series *Why we fight* by Frank Capra (1942–1945), demonstrate propaganda's ethical contribution to facilitating the dialogue and debate necessary in democratic societies.

However, other efforts sharing the same aim were made in the American film industry before 1942. Indeed, prior to U.S. involvement in World War II, newsreels and screen magazines progressively invested more minutes on news footage related to the country's war and defense policies. *The March of Time* was one of the most noteworthy newsreels of the era. Produced by the influential American publisher Henry Luce and directed by Louis de Rochemont, it excelled due to its didactic will and desire to encourage debate within American public opinion. *The March of Time* was defined as being ideologically against totalitarianism –fascism and communism– while appealing to “American liberalism”, and by 1936 had achieved an audience of 12 million viewers.

The object of this article is one of the most outstanding films produced in those pre-war years, within the formal and ideological coordinates established by those responsible for *The March of Time*. The film we are referring to is *The Ramparts We Watch*. Production began in

1938 and did not end until the world was already at war. To develop its content and achieve its planned didactic and propagandistic objectives, the film (1) advanced the principles of Archibald MacLeish's *strategy of truth*, being a precursor (and a model today) of those principles, and, in consequence, (2) employed similar discourse resources to those used by Frank Capra in his directing and editing of *Why We Fight*. From this standpoint, our article analyzes the consistency of the film's *mise en scène* with its informative and educational aims and Louis de Rochemont's contribution to creating a film documentary discourse in the field of public relations.

3. METHODOLOGY

It is very often the norm that, although film documents are submitted to an exhaustive physical description, practically no attention is paid to content, and the documentary analysis remains limited to a summary of the plot (i.e. the theme) and, sometimes only to the extraction of a few key index-linking concepts.

Without doubt, content analysis, both of plot and chronology, of a documentary film is, in itself, a wide-ranging task, partly because of the length of the documentary – especially in the case of full-length feature films. This task requires a lot of time, which the researcher does not usually have, and they often have quite enough to do in simply having to describe physically each film document that enters their organisation. On top of this, the complexity of film language enforces the researcher to concentrate on more elements, both objective and subjective, of meaning (in the case of props, for example) than those which are usually taken into account when analysing a televised document.

As Martín Arias (1995) states, there are two possible ways of approaching the study of cinema, depending on whether one takes into account the cinematographic fact or, on the contrary, what the film fact is considered to be. The first of these two approaches, the cinematographic fact, includes sociological, political, economic, ideological and even cinema history analyses. This means that, we would put here all that which refers to the context and which is, therefore, external to the movie as a concrete object. On a strictly research level we would also have to include in this category the physical description of the document, i.e. the film's index card.

As far as the film fact is concerned, this refers to the text, the content of the cinematographic document in itself, and this is made up of, on the one hand, image, and on the other hand, the sound track, both of which interrelate closely to shape a discourse. From a documentary perspective the film fact constitutes the basis for the analysis of the film content.

Therefore, we have used as a methodology of analysis the two levels of film content analyses:

- a) The first refers to technical data, which give us information about who directed the film, where it was produced, who was involved in its making (both on and off screen), what are the physical support characteristics of the filmed message, and whatever other information serves to identify it.
- b) The second refers to semantic data, i.e. content and message.

The object of study was the documentary *The Ramparts We Watch*, directed by Louis de Rochemont in 1940.

4. RESULTS

The producers of *The March of Time* treated the selected news items extensively, contextualizing them with archive images, scenes dramatized expressly for the occasion, explanatory captions, maps and a strong narrative voice that would soon become characteristic of the genre.

Fielding pointed out that the film had a clear didactic purpose. And in the name of this didacticism, the editors did not hesitate to commit themselves to the reality they were attempting to describe: “The intention of *The March of Time* was to create and exploit controversy and to provoke discussion of politically, economically, racially, socially, and militarily touchy subjects” (Fielding, 1978: 76).

Adopting a vague political position, *The March of Time*’s editors proclaimed themselves defenders of what they called *American liberalism* and defined themselves above all by their opposition to the large-scale totalitarian political systems –fascism and communism– present in various European countries at the time. They generally opposed all forms of

political movement founded, in their words, on demagoguery, considering it alien to what they defined as *American ethics* (Fielding, 1978).

In the face of the slow but inexorable increase in international tension throughout the thirties, the editors of *The March of Time* had sufficient opportunity to publicize their ideological viewpoint. From this perspective, in 1938 and 1940 Rochemont produced two fairly explicit screen magazines as part of the series *The March of Time: Inside Nazi Germany* (1938) and *The Ramparts We Watch* (1940). He and his collaborators used these films to propose two critical views of the Third Reich and to insist on the need for vigilance with regard to Hitler's expansionist ambitions.

This awareness of the importance of the mass media –and particularly cinema– in the expansionist strategy adopted by European dictatorships, highlighted by Rochemont and his collaborators with the first cinema screening of *Inside Nazi Germany* in 1938, went one step further two years later with the conclusion of *The Ramparts We Watch*. And the rhetoric of the documentary genre was an essential element in this.

The role played by documentary cinema in the construction of audiovisual messages for public relations purposes has been emphasized by different authors. L'Etang stated that "public relations and documentary shared similar aspirations to objectivity and truthfulness while at the same time trying to encompass an educational and sometimes overtly persuasive role" (L'Etang, 2000: 90). On the other hand, Kilborn (2006) pointed out that documentaries are one of the few audiovisual genres to reach better understanding of how institutions operate, stressing the full public relations potential of the genre. The definition of a documentary by American filmmaker W. Van Dike is useful in this respect: "a film in which elements of dramatic conflict represent social or political forces rather than individual ones" (cited by Fielding, 1978: 70). This provides a good verbal definition of the kind of films made for public relations purposes, and especially those made by John Grierson and Rochemont.

The Ramparts We Watch is a good example of the above quotations, especially with regard to its "aspirations to objectivity"; that is, revealing the truth of what had happened during

the First World War to persuade Americans of the dangers of the present (the Second World War). And to achieve this, Rochemont used a very accurate staging technique.

The main body of *The Ramparts We Watch* was a dramatized evocation –with non-professional actors and natural settings– of the years prior to the United States’ involvement in the First World War. In fact, one might say that the film takes as a starting point the idea that Germany would probably be the cause of the war repeating itself and then develops this in some depth.

In this respect, the authors of *The Ramparts We Watch* aimed to establish, by means of a full-length feature film, a parallelism between the events that led to the First World War and those taking place in Europe at the time (1938/1939). As Fielding argued: “The film’s story had been designed in such a manner that only the most obtuse members of the audience could fail to grasp the moral and see the similarities between the totalitarian ambitions of the Kaiser’s Germany in 1914 and Hitler’s in 1939” (Fielding, 1978: 246).

The extensive production of the film meant that international events would alter its original content and the script would be revised and modified on various occasions. Rochemont did not, in essence, change his initial discourse, but he did have to make room for several war episodes that had marked European reality in that short and intense period of time. When he had practically finished the film, the German army had already invaded Poland and the neutral countries of Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. He therefore concluded *The Ramparts We Watch* with images from these events.

This latter fact is fundamental in understanding the documentary vocation of *The Ramparts We Watch*, which led to it being updated with current news stories during its production. From this standpoint, Rochemont’s film anticipated the principles of Archibald MacLeish’s *strategy of truth*, such an influence on American cinema during the Second World War.

The film begins with captions that give a clear explanation of the relationship between events prior to the United States entering the First World War and what the country was experiencing at the time –1938/1939. Set in 1914, the narrator’s voice and images describe a country, the United States, in an all but idyllic situation. The ideal *American community* takes the form of a medium-sized town, with its church, its houses with gardens, its streetcars, its

milk deliveries, stores and train station (Fig. 1 to 7). A community made up of Americans of European descent (Fig. 8) and newcomers (immigrants: Fig. 9) in search of work; a prosperous community in which industry worked at full throttle (Fig. 10), in which work became the mechanism for integration (Fig. 11), and where children played carefree at the school gates (Fig. 12 & 13); a community, in short, that certified the success of the *American experience* and the progress of the United States.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

One of the central ideas of this first part of the film –interventionist by vocation, and close in this respect to the theories of president Roosevelt– was that precisely said success of the model of American life had distanced the country's inhabitants from the events taking place beyond its borders. Using this idea as a starting point, providing as it did a partial version of American isolationism, *The Ramparts We Watch* turned into an exhaustive chronicle of the years prior to the country's entry into war in 1917; years of public debates on whether to become involved in the conflict; years under the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, whose idealism and international vocation allowed the film to establish, without expressly saying it, diverse points of contact with Roosevelt.

Here we also see the influence on MacLeish's future strategy of truth, as the first part of Rochemont's film becomes a chronicle of past events which are narratively articulated via flashback (analepsis) – one of the narrative resources of film documentary discourse in public relations.

The ultimate intention of *The Ramparts We Watch* was to make explicit the idea that the events taking place in 1930s Europe or the Far East were not alien to the United States' reality or interests, just as the events that led to the First World War and American involvement in that conflict were not. In the background in both cases, for Rochemont and his collaborators what was at stake was precisely the American experience – the *American Way of Life*.

The lengthy first part of *The Ramparts We Watch* therefore concluded with a recourse to analepsis – setting the action after the end of the First World War, at the turn of the year between 1918 and 1919, and with the documentary's central figure recalling the words of the president, Woodrow Wilson. The character is shown in medium shot, seated at the table where that New Year was celebrated, recalling a fragment of the speech the president gave to Congress on 2 April 1917 attempting to gain its approval to declare war on Germany.

The role of analepsis as a narrative element to strengthen the idea of truth is reaffirmed when the film's central character says that he will never forget the words the president used to address the nation, via Congress, to give the reasons behind the United States having to fight a war taking place far beyond its borders. The character quotes a brief fragment of the speech given by Wilson:

[...]we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts – for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free³.

³ The speech at <http://www.lib.byu.edu/%7erdh/wwi/1917/wilswarm.html>

This flashback introduced via the script (as opposed to images) is another appeal to memory.

Above the image of this character, with the words of president Wilson still resonating, Rochemont has numbers appear to form the year 1940 (Fig. 14, 15 & 16). The wishes of the president for a world free from rivalries, a world where democratic principles are respected, which it seemed would be accomplished at the end of the First World War, now clashed with the reality of this new war.



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

The equivalences between these two historic moments were thus made evident; even though in 1940 the United States had not yet effectively become involved in the war. The sequence ended with the following two separate captions further reinforcing the idea of equivalence between these two historic moments:

The people of the United States went to war in 1917 because they feared the consequences of a German victory, feared and hated what might have happened to their world and to their hopes. /..../ Today a new and greater German war machine is on the march. And, again, the people of the United States know that a victorious Germany would mean disaster.

Therefore, as we have already said, Rochemont's initial approach, which was basically supposed to focus on chronicling the events surrounding the First World War and subsequent American involvement in the conflict, was altered by the events that led to the beginning of the Second World War.

Within said context, Rochemont incorporated a form of epilogue into *The Ramparts We Watch* which summarized the events of the first year of war. The interest of this final fragment lies to a great extent in how Rochemont and his collaborators approached it; an

approach that once more reaffirmed the importance those in charge of *The Ramparts We Watch* awarded cinema as a means of disseminating information and propaganda; and also their awareness of the importance it had in German expansionist strategy.

In this final segment, then, the editors of *The Ramparts We Watch* offer a description of the German method of warfare, the *Blitzkrieg*. And they do so by using, or reusing, images from a German documentary entitled *Feuertaufe* (directed by Hans Bertram in 1940), of which an English version was made under the title *Baptism of Fire*. This German documentary, like similar others (e.g. *Feldzug in Polen*, 1940; *Sieg im Westen*, 1941), became the cinematographic narration of the first German successes in their quest for European expansion. These films were used as propaganda material, intimidatory examples of German power aimed at nations that had not yet fallen under Nazi control.

[*Feuertaufe/Baptism of Fire*] had been intended by Hitler to be seen widely throughout Europe and the western hemisphere, and to intimidate not only French and British leaders, then at war with Germany, but also opinion leaders in neutral nations /.../ In the United States, it was shown to members of Congress in Washington, and was licensed by the German film company, UFA, for release in American theaters (Fielding, 1978: 246–247).

This is another clear example of analepsis used as a rhetorical resource to jog the audience's memory in audiovisual public relations discourse. As we have seen, the film's main character says that he will never forget the words of president Wilson. This, added to the description of the *Blitzkrieg*, helps the audience towards comprehension, awarding the discourse an informative dimension more characteristic of public relations than of propaganda; or, if not, one closer to ethical propaganda. As Burch (1970) explained, the audience understands flashbacks more easily because experience, memory and culture have accustomed them to relive the past.

In *The Ramparts We Watch*, Rochemont used the narrator's voice to state that the first step in German war strategy was that of propaganda, aimed at demoralizing the enemy and inspiring fear and terror (Manvell, 1974). British counterpropaganda, the narrator continued, had intercepted tons of German propaganda destined for America; and among this

intercepted material one item stood out: the aforementioned English version of the documentary *Feuertaufe*, entitled *Baptism of Fire*.

The Ramparts We Watch therefore proposed a meta-cinematographic mechanism for presenting images from the German documentary. Rochemont and his collaborators reconstructed a hypothetical cinema session screening the German documentary, or parts of it. The title of the English film *Baptism of Fire* was projected (in Gothic characters) on a screen. And this hypothetical screening ended with the title of the film and the word “end”, but this time in German: *Feuertaufe. Ende* (Fig. 18 & 19). Given the persuasive nature of the discourse in Rochemont’s film, this meta-cinematographic procedure also became meta-persuasive, turning the communicative act into both a means and an end, and reinforcing the effects of communication and persuasion.



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

The images following the initial title provide a summary of the stages of the *Blitzkrieg* designed by the Germans: the initial air force attack aimed at neutralizing the enemies’ principal communication channels, means of transport and centers of industrial production; then parachutists sent behind enemy lines to sabotage the broadcasting stations, mainly radio; following that, the deployment of panzers and the motorized army, which entered enemy territory at great speed; and finally, the advance of the infantry, which was to finish the work initiated by the other army units.

A certain fascination could be detected here: the narrator’s voice asserted that this type of warfare, which he identified as *total war*, was a science of which the Germans were masters; a fascination for the efficiency of its execution, the modernity of the approach and the

elements deployed, particularly the use of the air force and mobile units, but also the use of propaganda as a spearhead of a strategy apparently impossible to stop.

In parallel with this –undesired– fascination of German warfare, there was also the will to denounce it, and the forcefulness used to depicted German actions sought to impact upon American society, to reaffirm, for the nonbelievers, sceptics and isolationists, that this was a real threat and serious preparation was required to address it. To this end, the narrator's voice recalled a remark made by Hitler: "Today we dominate Europe, tomorrow the entire world".

Following this documentary summary, after the projection of the word *Ende*, *The Ramparts We Watch* finished by again referring to American values, *American heritage*. It was these values that were at stake and precisely these and the values they had defended throughout their history that needed to be taken as an example in the face of such a problematic future. A series of images appear in this final summary –converted into icons, symbols of that *American heritage*– which are worthy consideration because they became visual icons. In some cases they already were, even before Rochemont used them, and they would later be used in other important cinematographic public relations efforts in times of war, such as Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* (Xifra & Girona, 2012).

The end of *The Ramparts We Watch* suggests the importance of editing in constructing a discourse that aimed to represent the world according to precise purposes –influencing the audience's view with regard to the ideas or issues presented, and how to approach them; precisely and consciously organizing the figurative, and not so figurative, elements of diegesis. As Amiel (2001) pointed out, persuasive films build demonstrations.

With the eleven final images of *The Ramparts We Watch*, those in charge of making the film present a flashback, although this time progressively. Each image, or group of images, appear to direct the audience to one of the initial moments of the country's history. The first of these images depicts the statue of a soldier wearing the American First World War army uniform (Fig. 20). The three following images could be interpreted as clear references to keeping watch –the Americans kept watch (from the allegorical and hypothetical *ramparts*

of the title) over the seas and American coastline for possible attacks from outside (Fig. 21, 22 & 23).



Fig. 20



Fig. 21

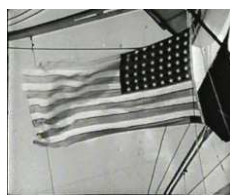


Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27

The final seven images evoke the American past, American heritage. The first image is an evocative statue of the pioneers (Fig. 24). The character holds a rifle – an essential element for life on the wild frontier and an acknowledged right of Americans in the second amendment of the Constitution. This statue establishes a clear visual link with the statue of the soldier from the First World War (Fig. 20). Both carrying a weapon, both symbolizing Americans who defended their country at different times of history and in doing so ensured the continuity of its values. The six images following the image of the pioneer guide the audience through the three stages of European immigrants arriving in and colonizing the country. In the opposite order to that of the cinematographic projection, the last of these images depicts a detailed shot of a stone with an inscription (Fig. 25). The stone is the Plymouth Rock, named after the place where in 1620 –the date of the inscription– the Pilgrim Fathers arrived on the American coast in the Mayflower. The following image –waves battering against the rocks (Fig. 26)– is intended to portray the origins of these first settlers – and by extension of all those who came after them– and their founding voyage across the sea, their exodus in search of new lands in which to live and freely express their religious beliefs. Following this image comes one (Fig. 27) which evokes the promised land, that land which divine providence has put within their reach. On this occasion, and not by chance, the

film's editors use one of the most characteristic images of Yosemite Valley, in the Sierra Nevada in California. Yosemite, founded in 1864, was the United States' first National Park.

The foundations of the country are a land that not yet civilized, virginal, primitive –with no human presence. And the two following images (Fig. 28 & 29) reaffirm this first impression: that of an immense territory, full of natural assets to exploit, the land of the wild frontier which would become home to these little agrarian communities, depositories of the American values at the heart of a society which over time would necessarily become more socially and politically complex, but which must not lose those original values. The process of civilization is made visual through the same image of the American community used at the beginning of the film (Fig. 30). Ordered nature –an artificial channeled river or lake and gardens– and the church –symbol of human beings' capacity to civilize, to construct– standing out in that environment. An image that certified the indissoluble union between the land, its pioneers, its political and social system and the religion that inspired them. This use of editing is a clear demonstration of a documentary *mise en scène*, where the power is found in depicting natural elements –and their being linked in the editing– and in recording –free from fictitious filters– the artificial work of man (in this case, buildings).



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30

The final cut of *The Ramparts We Watch* transports the audience from the First World War to the country's founding moment (in canonic terms). And then comes the reverse journey, via Plymouth Rock to the First World War, continuing on and demanding of the present generation, in the prewar context of the country at the time, a similar response to that of their ancestors.

The Ramparts We Watch inserted itself into that ideological *continuum* which, from the years of the Depression and the New Deal up until the moments prior to American

involvement in the war, had found diverse means of manifesting itself, thus making the film an element of information and propaganda.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Critical reception of *The Ramparts We Watch* was unenthusiastic, although *Time* magazine promoted the film in every issue of the month of July, 1940, calling it “a new kind of motion picture... for a new kind of world” (cited by Dunlop, 2006: 160). In August it also published a number of testimonials from well-known people who had seen the film. *Life* did the same, and on August 26, both *Life* and *Time* published a highly favorable two-page feedback on the film by Archibald MacLeish. According to Dunlop, the father of the strategy of truth saw *The Ramparts We Watch* as a “great achievement”, stating: “The fact was in 1917 –and the fact is today– that the defense of this democracy against an attack which might destroy its democratic institutions is alone, and of itself, a cause worth fighting for” (cited by Dunlop, 2006: 160).

These declarations suggest that Rochemont’s film was, as well as a clear forerunner of the strategy of truth, also an excellent example of it and therefore an effective public relations initiative in times of war. Indeed, as Girona and Xifra have argued, MacLeish’s *strategy of truth* and other subsequent efforts, such as those of General George C. Marshall or the production of documentary films like *Why We Fight*, show “the ethical contribution of propaganda to facilitate the dialogue and debate... necessary in democratic societies” (Girona and Xifra, 2009: 290). This conclusion is also corroborated by the results presented in the last section.

Furthermore, these results suggest that *The Ramparts We Watch* is a clear exponent of how audiovisual persuasive discourse uses its own grammar to achieve its rhetorical objectives. A grammar which it articulates through editing, on the basis of which the audiovisual discourse is constructed. Editing consists in ordering the shots of a film to form a series of sequences, some of which may be, as is the case with Rochemont’s film, anachronistic (Chatman, 1978).

One of the technical procedures in the anachronistic sequence is analepsis. As Xifra and Girona (2012) have suggested, analepsis plays a central role in public relations documentary

discourse. The result of analepsis is the sensation of reliving moments without losing the feeling of now in the story being told (Halloway, 1979). Analepsis means subjecting one's heart once again to past experiences. The time-image (Deleuze, 1989) betrays the storyline and History itself, representing the future as a flux of the present into the past. All in all, analepsis reveals and emphasizes the results of awareness being associated with memory. The results of this research show that the filmmaking of *The Ramparts We Watch* supports this standpoint – the film can be considered a model of public relations film during war times.

In times of war, such as the 1940s, this association is one of the most effective discursive mechanisms in managing the tension between explanation, interpretation, information and persuasion, and addressing the challenges of transparency and authenticity – the two activities shared by documentarists and public relations practitioners alike (L'Etang, 2000). This was very evident to British directors like Michael Powell, who used flashback in his propaganda films, thereby transferring “the aesthetic purity of the documentary to fiction” (Esteve, 2002: 133). Consequently, for filmmakers like Rochemont, Powell or others who have offered their talent in the service of public information and ethical propaganda, analpesis was not simply a formal issue, but much rather a moral one.

In sum, thanks to the *mise en scène* of *The Ramparts We Watch* —and the production of other propaganda fictional films, as *The House on 92nd Street* (Henry Hathaway, 1945) and *Boomerang!* (Elia Kazan, 1947)—, Louis de Rochemont should rightly be awarded a place as one of a group of filmmakers who, like John Grierson, Alberto Cavalcanti, Humphrey Jennings or Paul Rotha, have played an important role in creating a rhetorical and audiovisual dimension to public relations, and particularly in the production of educational films and documentaries like *The Ramparts We Watch*. Certainly, as L'Etang (2006) pointed out, Grierson saw educational films as an instrument of social action and a key source of social change: “if you can't teach the citizenry to know everything all the time, you can give them comprehension of the dramatic patterns within a living society” (Grierson, cited by L'Etang, 2006: 32). This statement would seem to have served as an inspiration to Rochemont and MacLeish.

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